

Adolf Hitler on the Balkans Campaign

Address by Chancellor Adolf Hitler to the Reichstag

Translated by BBC

Speech given by the Chancellor to the Reichstag, May 4, 1941



4 May 1941, Adolf Hitler makes a speech in Berlin's Reichstag about the Balkan situation – [Hitler Archive](#)

Deputies of the German Reichstag: At a time when deeds are everything and words but little, it is not my intention to approach you, elected representatives of the German nation, more often than absolutely necessary. The first time that I turned to you was at the outbreak of the War, at the moment when, owing to the Anglo-French conspiracy against peace, **every attempt to reach a possible compromise with the Poles** which was otherwise possible had been eliminated. The most ruthless man of the present day who (as they themselves admit today) as early as 1936 had **conceived a plan of devastating and, if possible, destroying Germany** in a bloody war, **because she was growing too powerful in her peaceful prosperity**, had at last found an instrument in the Polish state, and prepared to draw the sword for their interests and aims.

All my attempts at reaching an understanding, particularly with England, nay even permanent friendly cooperation, were foiled by the wish of a small clique, who, either out of hatred or for material reasons, refused any German suggestion of agreement and did not conceal their intention or desire of war. The driving personality behind this mad and devilish plan of starting war at any price was Churchill and his accomplices, the men in the present British Government. They were trying to get support, openly and secretly, from the great democracies on this side and on the other side of the

ocean. **At a time when the discontent of peoples with their Governments had reached a peak, those irresponsible men believed to be able to cope with a problem by means of a war.** Behind them was Jewish banking, the Stock Exchange and armament capital, which was attracted, as once before, by the opportunity of a great, if dirty, deal. As before, they were ruthlessly prepared to shed the blood of their peoples. Thus, the war started.

A few weeks later, the country that had been the first to allow itself to be harnessed to the interests of Capital, was smitten and destroyed. Under these circumstances, and to spare innocent and decent people, who, no doubt, exist also in that other world, I decided to make another appeal to the statesmen. On 6th October, 1939, I declared that Germany had no grievance against England or France, and I pointed out the horrors that modern arms would bring to large areas once they were unbridled. I warned them of the effects of heavy and long-range artillery against civilian settlements, which would only lead to the destruction of wide stretches of land on both sides. I warned them of the Air Force which must bring about destruction with its long arm to all that which had been built up by centuries of hard work.

They repudiated my appeal just as that of 1st of September, 1939. **The British warmongers, and the Jewish capital behind them, found no other interpretation of my considerations of humanity than the assumption of German weakness.** They assured the peoples of England and France that Germany was trembling for fear of disintegration in Spring, 1940, and wanted to conclude peace out of fear. They declared that peace could not come about until the German Reich was destroyed and its destitute people would be queuing in front of the field kitchens of their enemies, begging for food.

Blinded by such prophecies, the Norwegian Government was then playing with the idea of a British invasion, of tolerating the **occupation of Norwegian ports and of the Swedish ore districts.** So certain were Churchill and Paul Reynaud of the success of their plan that, either **out of frivolity or under the effects of drink,** they thought they need no longer conceal their plans. To this loquacity the German Government owes knowledge of this plan, and the German nation what was, perhaps, the decisive counter-stroke. The British plot against Norway was, undoubtedly, the most threatening action. A few weeks later, this danger was forestalled. The prevention of the attack by British and French forces against the right flank of our front was one of the boldest feats of arms in history. This successful German defense brought about such strengthening of our European positions that it can hardly be estimated high enough.

After the failure of this plan, an increased pressure was exerted on Belgium and Holland. Since the stroke against the ore supplies had been foiled, they hoped to eliminate the ore-processing districts by carrying their front into the Rhineland. **On 10th May last year,** that most memorable struggle in German history began, and

within a few days the enemy front was broken up and conditions were created which led to the greatest battle of destruction in world history. **France collapsed; Belgium and Holland were occupied. The British Forces, battered and smitten, left the continent.**

On 19th July, 1940, I summoned the Reichstag for the third time, as you will remember, to give them my account and to give expression to the nation's gratitude to its soldiers.

Again I took the opportunity of that meeting to appeal to the world for peace. I did not permit any doubts that my hopes in this direction could only be slight, in view of my experiences. For the men who had wanted the war do not act out of some kind of ideal conviction; **the moving force behind them was Jewish-Democratic capitalism, to which they were indebted and, therefore, subjected.** The milliards of capital already invested and immobilized by these people interested in the war cried out for a return, and amortization. Therefore, a war of long duration did not frighten them; on the contrary, it was convenient. This capital, in the form of factories and machines, needed time to come into operation and even more time until it came to the distribution of the expected profits. Nothing is more hateful to these Jewish-Democratic people interested in the war than the thought that an appeal made to the commonsense of the nations could, at the last minute perhaps, succeed in ending the war without further bloodshed, and thus curtail the profits of their invested milliards. Events happened exactly as I had predicted. My peace offer was alleged to be a sign of fear and cowardice. **The European and American warmongers again succeeded in blurring the sanity of the masses,** who cannot gain by this war. They succeeded in awakening new hopes by lying statements, and finally, with the help of a public opinion directed by their Press, made the people continue the fight.

My warnings against night bombing of the civilian population advocated by Mr. Churchill, were interpreted only as a sign of German impotence. This most bloody dilettante in history seriously thought he could regard the German Air Force's forbearance over months as proof of its inability to fly by night. This man ordered his paid scribes to lie to the English people for months that the British Air Force only and solely was in a position to wage war in this way, and that means had been found to force the Reich down by the relentless war of the English Air Force against the German civilian population, together with the hunger blockade. I warned against this again and again for more than three and a half months. I am not surprised that these warnings had no influence on Mr. Churchill. **What does the happiness of other people, what does culture, what do buildings mean to this man?** At the very beginning of the war he said that **he wanted war, even if the towns of England should be reduced to rubble and debris.** Now he has got this war. My assurance that from a certain moment onwards we would retaliate for every bomb a hundred-fold if necessary, **could not move this man to think of the criminality of his actions.** He declares that it did not depress him. He even assures us that the British people, too, had been looking at him

with elated gaiety after such air attacks, so that he always returned to London reassured.

It may be that Mr. Churchill was reassured in his decision to continue the war in this way. We, however, are not less determined to throw back for every bomb a hundred if necessary in the future, until the British people get rid of this criminal and his methods. (Applause) And if Mr. Churchill thinks that from time to time he had to reinforce the power and intensity of his war by propaganda, then we are prepared (slowly and emphatically) finally to begin this war in that way too. The appeal of this fool and his vassals to the German people to desert me on May Day, can only be explained by a paralytical disease or **the mania of a drunkard**.

The decision to convert the Balkans into a theatre of war, also has its root in this abnormal mental state. Like a madman, this man has been running all over Europe for almost five years to find anything which would burn. **Unfortunately paid creatures can always be found who open the doors of their countries to these international incendiaries.** Having succeeded during the winter, in forcing, by a whole cloud of assertions and falsifications, the opinion on the British people that the German Reich was exhausted by the campaign last year and had come to the end of its powers, he **saw himself obliged, to prevent their awakening, to create yet another pyre in Europe.** For this purpose he returned to a project of which he had already thought in Autumn 1939 and in Spring 1940. You remember, men of the German Reichstag, the published documents of La Charite which revealed the **attempt to create a European theatre of war in the Balkans as early as the winter of 1939-40.** The instigators of this undertaking were Mr. Churchill, Halifax, Daladier, Paul Reynaud, General Weygand and Gamelin. As could be seen from these documents, it was hoped, should this plan against the peace of South East Europe succeed, to mobilize about a 100 divisions in the interests of England. The sudden collapse in May-June last year upset these plans, but by the autumn of last year, Churchill again started to consider this project. This attempt had become more difficult, because a change had taken place in the Balkans. Owing to the changes in Rumania, that State was finally lost for England. The new Rumania, under the leadership of General Antonescu, began to conduct an exclusively Rumanian policy, without regard to the hopes of British war interests. In addition, there was Germany's attitude itself. When I today speak about this point, I will give, first of all, a short description of the aims of German policy in the Balkans.

First, from the outset, the German Reich has had no territorial or selfish political interests in the Balkans. Therefore, Germany was not at all interested in territorial questions and the internal state of the Balkan countries from any selfish interests. Second, Germany has always endeavored to open up and consolidate close economic relations with these countries. This was not only in the interests of the Reich, but also in the interests of those countries for, if anywhere, the national economies of two trade partners complement each other sensibly, then this was the case between the Balkans and Germany. Germany is an industrial State and needs foodstuffs and raw materials.

The Balkans produce foodstuffs and have raw materials and require industrial products. The result is an opportunity for the fruitful extension of the mutual economic relations. If English and American circles are of opinion that the establishment of trade relations between Germany and the Balkans represents an unlawful penetration of the Balkans by Germany, this is a presumption as stupid as it is impertinent. **Every State directs its economic policy according to its own interests and not according to those of rootless Jewish democratic capitalists.** Apart from this, England and America can figure only as sellers, but never as buyers in these countries. It requires the entire economic narrow-mindedness of capitalistic democrats to believe that, in the long run, States can exist which are obliged to buy from someone who neither wants to buy from them nor is in a position to do so.

Germany has not only been selling to the Balkans, but she has also been the largest buyer there, and a good and lasting buyer at that. She has paid for the products of the Balkans by the work of German industrial workers, and not by bogus currency. It is, therefore, not surprising that **Germany has become the most important trade partner of the Balkans**, and this is not only in the interests of Germany.

Only the really capitalistic-minded brain of Jewish capitalists can form the idea that a State which delivers machines to another country thus acquires domination over it. It is easier to go without machines than without food and raw materials. The partner who receives wheat and raw materials is perhaps more tied than the other. No! In this bargain there was no victor or vanquished; there are only partners. Germany has always been most anxious to be an honest partner and to **pay with good products and not with democratic bogus money.**

Third, if you want to speak about political interests at all **Germany has had only one interest in the Balkans, namely to see that her trade partners were internally sound and strong.** She has, therefore, done everything possible, by advice and action, by her influence and assistance, to help these countries to consolidate their own existence and their internal order without heed to the particular form of State prevailing there. The prosecution of this effort led to increasing prosperity in these countries and to the gradual growth of mutual confidence. It was, of course, Mr. Churchill's endeavour to put an end to this peaceful develop meet, and by the impertinent forcing of British guarantees and pledges of assistance upon those countries, to carry elements of unrest, insecurity, mistrust and even quarreling into these European territories. He was supported by all those obscure persons under British influence who were ready to place the interests of their own nation after the wishes of those who gave the orders. By these guarantees, **first the Rumanian State and then Greece was enticed.** I think it has been abundantly proved by now that, behind these guarantees there has never been a real power to give help, but only the effort to drag those countries to the precipice of the policy dictated by selfish interests. Rumania has paid dearly for that guarantee. Greece, who had the least need for such a guarantee, following the British enticement also agreed to link her fate with England. I believe I owe it to historical truth to say that,

even today, a difference must be made between the Greek nation and the small group of people who, inspired by a King subservient to England, were not so bent upon discharging the real task of Statesmanship as to make the aims of the British war policy their own.

I was genuinely sorry, and, to me as a German who has always had the deepest veneration for the culture of that country from which the first light of beauty and dignity sprang, it was particularly painful to witness the development of events without being able to do anything about it. I have learnt from the documents of La Charite how the forces worked, which sooner or later, were bound to thrust the Greek State into immeasurable disaster. In the late summer of last year Mr. Churchill succeeded in confusing certain circles to such an extent, by issuing platonic promises of guarantees, that a continual **chain of violations of neutrality followed. Italy was also concerned.** Therefore, she felt induced to make proposals to the Greek Government to put an end to this intolerable state of affairs. Under the influence of British warmongers, this proposal was brusquely rejected **and the peace in the Balkans came to an end.** When the bad weather set in, and while the Greek soldiers offered an extremely brave resistance to the Italians, the Athens Government had sufficient time to ponder the possibilities of a reasonable solution. With the slight hope of being able to contribute to such a solution, Germany did not break off relations with Greece. However, I pointed out then, that I should not be willing to witness, without taking action, the revival of the Salonika ideas of the World War.

My warning that the British would be thrown into the sea at once, whenever they tried to set foot anywhere in Europe, was unfortunately not taken seriously. We could see during the winter that **England was creating bases for a new Salonika Army.** They began building aerodromes and the necessary ground organization, believing that they could occupy the aerodromes very quickly. They eventually sent transports, containing the equipment for an army which, in Mr. Churchill's opinion, could be sent into Greece within a few weeks. We were not unaware of this, as you know, but watched these activities for many months with great attention, if with restraint.

The setback which the Italian Army in North Africa suffered because of a technical inferiority in anti-tank devices, as well as tanks, led Mr. Churchill to believe that the moment had come to shift the theatre of war from Libya to Greece. He ordered the transfer of his tanks, as well as **infantry divisions, consisting mainly of Australians and New Zealanders, to start the coup which would plunge the Balkans into a sea of fire.** Mr. Churchill thereby committed one of the greatest mistakes of this war. As soon as England's intention to set foot in the Balkans could no longer be doubted, I took the necessary steps to get to this vital place all the forces necessary to oppose any nuisance that gentleman might cause. I state here expressly that these measures were not directed against Greece.

The Duce himself has never asked me to put at his disposal a single division for that purpose, for he was convinced that a quick decision would be arrived at one way or another in the forthcoming favourable season. I was of the same opinion. The march of the German forces, therefore, represented no assistance to Italy against Greece, but **a preventive measure against the British attempt to use the Italo-Greek conflict to set foot on Greek soil**, thus preparing for a decision along the lines of the Salonika Army of the World War. **They wanted above all to drag still more nations into the war.**

Their hopes were based, among others, on two States, **Turkey and Yugoslavia**. I had attempted to bring about a close collaboration, based on economic ties, with these two States, since my advent to power. Yugoslavia, as far as the Serb nucleus is concerned, had been our enemy in the World War. Yes, the World War started in Belgrade. Nevertheless, the German people had no hatred for the Yugoslavs. Turkey had been our ally in the World War. Its unfortunate result was as heavy a burden for Turkey as it was for us. The great and ingenious reconstructor of the new Turkey gave his Allies, beaten by fate, the first example of resurrection. While Turkey, thanks to the realistic attitude of her State leadership, preserved her independent attitude Yugoslavia fell a victim to British intrigues.

Members of the Reichstag, and, above all, my old Party comrades, you know how much I endeavored to bring about friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia. I worked for it for many years. I believed I was assisted in my endeavour by some representatives of that country, who seemed to see, as I did, only advantages in our close collaboration. **When danger drew near to the Balkans, as a result of British intrigues**, I intensified my endeavor to preserve Yugoslavia from this fatal entanglement. Our Foreign Minister, party member Ribbentrop, with his patience and ingenious persistence, again and again pointed out the necessity of that collaboration, to keep at least that part of Europe out of the war. He made exceptional and loyal proposals to the Yugoslav Government, with the result that in Yugoslavia, too, the voices in favor of close collaboration seemed to increase. It is, therefore, **quite true when Mr. Halifax declares that Germany never intended to make war in the Balkans**. On the contrary, it was our earnest intention to prepare the way for closer collaboration with Yugoslavia, and perhaps even to bring about a settlement of the Greek conflict acceptable to Italy. The Duce not only approved of our endeavors to bring Yugoslavia into line with our peace aims, but assisted them by every means. It thus became finally possible to move the Yugoslav Government to join the Three-Power Pact. This Pact made no claims on Yugoslavia, and offered her nothing but advantages. For the sake of historic truth, I must point out that neither this Pact nor the supplementary agreement demanded any assistance whatsoever from Yugoslavia. On the contrary, Yugoslavia received from the Three Powers the solemn assurance that they would not ask her for assistance, and were even prepared to abstain from any transport of war materials through Yugoslavia from the very beginning. At the request of her Government, Yugoslavia also received the guarantee of an outlet under Yugoslav sovereignty to the Aegean Sea, in the case

of any territorial changes in the Balkans. This outlet was to include Salonika. On 25th March, a Pact was signed in Vienna which offered the greatest possible future to the Yugoslav State, and secured peace for the Balkans at the same time. You will understand that on that day I left the beautiful city on the Danube with a truly happy feeling, not only because eight years' labor seemed to yield their reward at last, but because it appeared at the last minute as if German intervention in the Balkans would be rendered unnecessary. Two days' later we were deeply shocked by the news of a coup carried out by a handful of hirelings – a deed which drew from the British Prime Minister the triumphant exclamation: "At last, I have good news to give you." You will not fail to understand, deputies, that in these circumstances I at once gave the order for attack. The German Reich cannot be treated like that. It is impossible to woo someone's friendship for years, to conclude a treaty to the exclusive advantage of another party, only to have it broken overnight, to see the representatives of the Reich insulted, the military attaché threatened, his assistant injured, the dwellings of Reich Germans destroyed and Germans generally persecuted as an outlawed prey.

I have indeed wanted peace. Mr. Halifax declared with a jeer, as if to praise a triumph of British diplomacy, that this was the reason why we were forced to fight. In face of such malice, I can do nothing but protect the interests of the Reich with such means as, thank God, are at our disposal.

I was able to take this decision all the more calmly as I could rely on the constant and immutable **fidelity and friendly attitude of Bulgaria, and also of Hungary**, now filled with justified indignation. Both these old Allies of the World War necessarily felt this act a provocation, coming from a State that once before had set the whole of Europe on fire and afterwards caused untold suffering to Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria.

On 27th March, I issued general operational directions to the High Command of the Armed Forces, which presented the Army and the Air Force with a very difficult task. The march to new operational bases had to be improvised; detachments already on the spot had to be moved; supplies had to be ensured. The Air Force had to make use of numerous improvised bases, some of which were water-logged. Without the understanding assistance of Hungary, and the thoroughly loyal attitude of Rumania, it would have been very difficult indeed to carry out the orders in the short time at our disposal. I fixed the attack for 6th April. On this day, the Southern Group in Bulgaria was ready to attack. The other Army groups were to be employed as they got ready. The dates were fixed for 8th, 10th, 11th respectively.

The idea of the operations was: first, to advance with one army from the Bulgarian area into Greek Thrace, towards the Aegean; the weight of this advance was placed on the right wing, where divisions of mountain troops and an armored division were to force a break-through to Salonika. Second, to thrust with a second Army in the direction of Skopje and join up speedily with the Italian troops operating from Albania; these

operations were due to begin on 6th April. Third, an attack starting on the 8th from Bulgaria in the direction of [Nish](#), with the aim of reaching the [Belgrade](#) area; a German corps was to occupy the Barnt on the 10th, and reach Belgrade from the north. Fourth, on the 11th, an army operating from [Corinthia](#), [Styria](#) and western Hungary was to open an attack in the general direction of [Zagreb](#), [Sarajevo](#) and Belgrade.



[The Balkans during the Second World War](#)

Three agreements had been concluded with our Allies, Italy and Hungary. The Italian Armed Forces intended to advance from the Julian Front along the coast of Albania, while other troops operating from Albania were to establish contact with them, break through the Yugoslav fortifications in the direction of Skopje to effect a junction with the German Army advancing in this area, and finally break the Greek Front in Albania itself and push the enemy towards the sea. In connection with these operations, the

[Dalmatian](#) and [Ionian Islands](#) were to be occupied and other bases taken. There had been agreements also for collaboration between the two air forces.

The leadership of the German armies operating against [Macedonia](#) and Greece was in the hands of General Field-Marshal von List who, this time again, in the most difficult conditions, accomplished his task in truly superior style. The forces operating from the South-West of the Reich and from Hungary against Yugoslavia were under the command of General-Oberst von Weichs. He, too, reached the objectives set him in the shortest possible time with the troops at his disposal.

The Army and Military SS detachments forced the Greek Army in Thrace to capitulate within five days; they established contact with the Italian forces advancing from Albania; they brought Salonika firmly under their control. After 12 days, Serbia was forced to capitulate, and the preliminary condition was fulfilled for the equally hard and glorious break-through to Athens. This operation was crowned by the occupation of the Peloponnesian and the Greek Islands.

A comprehensive appreciation of these historic achievements will be given by the High Command of the Armed Forces under the leadership of General Field-Marshal Keitel and General Jodl, who always did excellent work.

The Air Force, under the personal command of the Reich Marshal and his Chief of Staff, General Jeschenik, was divided in two main groups under the Command of General-Oberst Loehr and General von Richthofen. The task of the Air Force was, first, to destroy the enemy air force and its ground organization; second, to attack all the important military objectives in the [centre of conspiracy, Belgrade](#), or eliminate them right from the beginning; third, to give the most active support to the fighting forces by flights and by anti-aircraft activity; to break the resistance of the enemy, to render his flying operations difficult and, if possible, to prevent his subsequent embarkation. Furthermore to render further valuable assistance to the army by the use of parachutists.

Members of the Reichstag! In this campaign, the German armed forces have truly surpassed themselves. The actual deployment of the troops offered tremendous difficulties. The attack against the partly very-strongly-fortified positions, particularly at the front in Thrace, was one of the heaviest tasks which could ever be put before an army. In this campaign, whole units fought in territory which, up to now, had been considered absolutely impassable for tanks. The units performed tasks worthy of the highest praise not only of the men, their ability, courage, endurance, but also of the quality of the material. Infantry, tanks and alpine divisions, as well as units of the SS, competed with each other in indefatigable self-sacrifice, courage and devotion, in endurance and ability, to accomplish the tasks they had been ordered to carry out. The work of the General Staff was again excellent. The Air Force has added new laurels to its already historical glory. With a bravery and a devotion which can only be judged by

one who knows the difficulties of this territory, it has carried out attacks under the worst possible climatic conditions – attacks which only a short while ago would have been considered impossible. Anti-aircraft guns, as usual, accompanied the infantry and Panzer divisions on roads which could hardly be described as bridle paths. Only one sentence can be written about this campaign: "Nothing is impossible for the German soldier." The drivers of military cars and lorries, of supply and other lorries, of the artillery, of the Air Force and of the A.A. guns, are to be especially mentioned in this theatre of war. In the fight against fortified positions, as well as in the construction of bridges and roads, our engineers have attained special glory; the signaling troops deserve the highest praise. On impassable roads, over blown-up streets, over rolling stones and mountain paths, over broken bridges, through high passes, over bare fields, this victorious campaign has finished the war in two States within three weeks.

We know that a large share of this success is due to our Allies. In particular, the fight sustained for six months in the most difficult conditions and with the greatest sacrifices, which [Italy waged against Greece](#), not only engaged the greater part of the Greek Army, but so weakened it that its collapse had already become inevitable. The Hungarian Army also, again proved its old military glory. It occupied the [Batchka](#) and advanced across the [Sava](#) with motorized columns. Historical justice obliges me to state that of the enemies who took up positions against us, the Greek soldier particularly fought with the highest courage. He capitulated only when further resistance had become impossible and useless.

But I must also speak of the enemy who planned and started this fight. As a German and a soldier, I think it undignified to vilify a brave enemy; I think, however, that it is necessary to protect the truth from the bragging of a man who, as a soldier, is a wretched politician, and as a politician an equally wretched soldier. Mr. Churchill, who started this fight too, tries, just as in Norway and at Dunkirk, to say something here which, sooner or later, can be falsified into a success. I don't consider this honorable, but I find it understandable, coming from this man. If ever anyone else had experienced so many defeats as a politician and so many catastrophes as a soldier, he would not have retained his office for six months, unless he had had that ability, **which is Mr. Churchill's only ability, to lie with pious devotion for so long that eventually the most terrific defeats are turned into glorious victories**. Mr. Churchill can dope his own countrymen in this way, but he cannot do away with the consequences of his defeat. A British Army of 60,000 or 70,000 men was landed in Greece, although before the catastrophe, this same man pretended that there were 240,000. The aim of this army was to attack Germany from the south, to inflict defeat on her and to terminate the war from here, just as in 1918.

Churchill's aider and abettor, who had again been drawn into the catastrophe in this case, Yugoslavia, was destroyed after a little under two weeks from the beginning of the operations. The British troops in Greece were, three weeks later, either killed, wounded, taken prisoner, drowned or chased out of the country. These are the facts.

Thus, in my last speech, too, when I announced that wherever the British should come to the Continent they will be attacked by us and driven into the sea, I proved a better prophet than Mr. Churchill. He brazenly declared that this war has cost us 75,000 dead, that is, more than double the number of the Western campaign. He even went further, he ordered one of his hirelings to inform his English countrymen, who so rarely show intelligence, that the British, having killed enormous masses of Germans, finally turned away with horror from this slaughter and that they withdrew, so to speak, only for that reason. It follows altogether that the Australians and New Zealanders would still be in Greece had not the English, with their rare mixture of leonine courage and childlike soft-heartedness, killed so many Germans that, disgusted and horrified with their own heroic deeds, they finally withdrew, embarked and made away.

This is how it came about that we found almost exclusively Australian and New Zealand dead and that we took almost exclusively Australian and New Zealand prisoners. Such stuff you can tell the public in a democracy. But now **I shall put before you the results of this campaign in a few brief figures.** In the course of the operations against Yugoslavia, without counting the soldiers of German stock or the Croats and Macedonians who were immediately released, we had the following purely Serb prisoners: 6,298 officers and 337,864 men. These figures are not final. The number of Greek prisoners, amounting to 8,000 officers and 210,000 men, cannot be compared with the above figures for, as far as the Greek, Macedonian and the Epirus Armies are concerned, they were encircled and forced to capitulate only as a consequence of common German-Italian operations. The Greek prisoners, too, have been or will be immediately released because of their gallant bearing. The number of English, New Zealand and Australian prisoners exceeds 9,000 officers and men. The booty cannot yet be even approximately calculated. Our share, according to estimates made so far, amounts to more than half a million rifles, far more than a thousand guns, many thousands of machine-guns, anti-aircraft artillery, mortars, numerous vehicles and large quantities of munitions and equipment. To this I should like to add the tonnage of enemy shipping sunk by the German Air Force. Seventy-five ships of a total of 400,000 tons were destroyed and ~47 ships of a total of 700,000 tons were damaged.

These results were achieved through the employment of the following German forces: Firstly, for the operations in the southeast, altogether 31 full divisions and two half divisions were provided. The lining up of these forces took place within seven days. Secondly, out of these, 11 infantry and Alpine divisions, six armored divisions and three complete and two half-motorized divisions of the army and the armed SS troops were actually employed in battle. Thirdly out of these units, 11 were in action for more than six days and ten less than six days. Fourthly, 11 units did not go into action at all. Fifthly, even before the conclusion of operations in Greece, three units could be withdrawn and three more units were no longer required, and, therefore, not brought up from the rear, while two units were stopped for the same reason in the unloading areas. Sixthly, out of these only five units altogether were engaged in battle with the English. Out of

the three armored divisions included in this figure only two were constantly employed, whereas the third was stopped in the course of operations and withdrawn, as it was also no longer required. Consequently, I am stating, in conclusion, that in the fight with the English, New Zealanders and Australians, altogether only two armored divisions, one Alpine division and the body guard were employed.

The losses of the German Army and the German Air Force, as well as of the armed SS troops in this campaign, were the smallest we have had so far. In the battle with Yugoslavia and Greece, or with the British in Greece, the German Army and the armed SS troops lost 57 officers and 1,042 non-commissioned officers killed, 181 officers and 3,571 NCO's and men wounded; and 13 officers and 372 NCO's and men missing. The Air Force: 10 officers and 42 NCO's and men dead; and 36 officers and 104 NCO's and men missing. My Deputies of the Reichstag, I can only say again that we are sympathizing with the heaviness of the sacrifice of the families afflicted and that we, like the whole German nation, are expressing our gratitude from the bottom of our hearts. But, seen from a wider angle, these losses are so minute that they are the highest justification for the start and the period of this campaign, for the direction of the operations, and thirdly, for their execution. It is the training of our Commanding Corps which is beyond compare, the high quality of our troops, the superiority of our equipment, the quality of our munitions, as well as the icy cold courage of each single man, which enabled us to win with such small losses. The success of such historically decisive importance was won at the same time as the two allied Axis Powers in North Africa could also liquidate in the course of a few weeks the so-called success of the British forces there. For we cannot separate from the operations in the Balkans, the action of the German African Corps, connected with the name of General Rommel and of the Italian Forces in the Battle for [Cyrenaica](#).

One of the most bungling of strategists has thus lost two battlefields in one stroke. That this man, who in every other country would have been court-martialed, is enjoying new admiration as Prime Minister in his land (Hitler's voice very sarcastic) is not a proof of the classical greatness shown by Roman Senators towards their valiantly-defeated Army Commanders, but a sign of that eternal blindness with which the Gods strike those whom they wish to destroy.

The consequences of this campaign are extraordinary. In view of the oft-proved chance that in Belgrade time and again a handful of conspirators were able to kindle a fire for extra-Continental interests, it means a relaxation for the whole of Europe that this danger has now been definitely abolished. The Danube, that important traffic-war, has now been safeguarded against acts of sabotage for all time to come. Traffic there has again been resumed to its full extent.

Apart from some modest adjustment of its frontiers infringed after the last war, the German Reich has no territorial interests in that zone. Politically, it is interested only in the safeguarding of peace in this area; economically in the establishment of an order

that will provide for the production of goods for the general benefit and that will again revive the exchange of products.

It is, however, in the spirit of a higher justice that along with this ethnographic, economic and historic interests are being considered and met. With regard to this development, however, Germany is merely an interested spectator.

We welcome the fact that our allies are now able to satisfy their national and political ambitions. We rejoice at the establishment of Independent **Croatia**, with which we hope we shall be able to entertain friendship and mutual faith throughout the future. In the economic field, this cannot but lead to mutual benefit.

That the **Hungarian nation** has advanced by one more step towards the revision of that unjust peace once forced upon her fills us with cordial sympathy. That the injustice once done to **Bulgaria** is being put right moves us especially, because we feel that since this revision was made possible by German arms the German nation has repaid a historic debt of gratitude towards its faithful comrade-in-arms of the Great War.

That, however, our ally **Italy** should obtain that territorial and political influence which is due to her alone in her living-space, she has more than deserved, in view of the exceedingly heavy blood sacrifices she has had to bear since October of last year for the sake of the future of the Axis.

Towards the vanquished and unhappy **Greek nation** we feel sincere sympathy. It was the victim of its King and of its deluded leading caste. It has, however, fought so bravely that even the respect of its enemies cannot be withheld from it.

The **Serbian nation**, however, will perhaps after all draw the only correct conclusion from this war some day: namely, that the coup d'etat officers were only a misfortune for it.

All those concerned, however, will perhaps bear in mind this time that exceedingly noble manner and way in which the country and its leaders, for whom they had the honor of sacrificing themselves, have now dissociated themselves according to that handsome principle of the "Moor being dismissed after having done his duty."

I think that hardly ever has greater cynicism been meted out to small nations who have sacrificed themselves than in this case. To drive a nation into a way as a handyman, and then **to declare that one did not believe in success right from the beginning**, but that one had to do it to make someone else, who did not want to fight in this theatre, fight after all – that, I think is the most shameless instance that world history can offer. **Only in an epoch when capitalist greed for money and political hypocrisy are blended** in such a way as is the case in our democracies today can such a mode of action **be regarded as so little dishonoring that he who is responsible for it can even boast about it in public.**

My Deputies of the German Reichstag: if we survey this latest campaign then we realize again the importance of a most thorough training of our soldiers, and also of their superb equipment. Very much blood has been saved because very much sweat has previously been sacrificed! All that our soldiers had been taught in relentless and troublesome training has brought great benefit, particularly in these operations. With a minimum of blood has a maximum of effect been achieved, thanks to the training, thanks to the ability of the German soldier, and thanks to his leadership. However, this minimum of sacrifice demands a maximum of arms, an optimum in the quality of arms, a maximum of ammunition and optimum quality of ammunition.

I am not one of those people who regard war only as a problem of material. After all, material is lifeless; it is man who brings it to life. But even the best soldier must fail if a bad or an inadequate weapon is handed to him. Therefore, the life of many of our sons rests with the home country. Its sweat can save the blood of our soldiers. It is, therefore, the supreme duty of every German to do his best for our fighting front and to provide it with the arms which it requires. Apart from all the other factors that once led to the loss of the last war, it was, in the end, the lack of a new weapon of attack, decisive even then, and the lack of the corresponding weapon for defense.

What our soldiers can achieve they have proved in this campaign. The sum total of their hardships, individually and collectively, will never be forgotten by the home country. Whatever the home front makes available of its own energy in this fateful struggle bears no comparison with what millions of our men have achieved at the fronts, what they must achieve, and what they will achieve. I do not wish that any other country should ever surpass us in this respect. Nay, more than that: it is the duty of all of us to see to it that our lead does not diminish, but, on the contrary, steadily increases.

This is not a problem of capital, but exclusively one of labor and thus one of our own will and our own capabilities. I believe that, in the first place, the German girl and the German woman can make yet a further contribution. Millions of German women are on the land, in the fields, and performing the hardest work possible; they have to replace the men. Millions of German women and girls are working in factories and workshops and in offices and there, too, they give a good account of themselves. It is not unfair if we demand that still many hundreds of thousands others should take these millions of working German *Volksgenossinnen* (comrades) as an example.

Even if **we are today in a position to mobilize in the sphere of work more than half of Europe for this fight**, our own people still remain the most valuable factor in this process of work. If today, the democratic demagogues of the country against which the German people have never done anything, with the assertion that the German people intended to do something against them – which is an absurd lie – are threatening to suffocate the National Socialist People's State, which is inconvenient to them by the force of their capitalistic system and their material production, then there

is only one reply: The German people will never again experience a 1918, but will rise to ever higher achievements in all spheres of national defense. With increased fanaticism, it will stand to the sentence which I pronounced in my first Reichstag speech, that neither force of arms nor time will ever make us yield, let alone break the German people. It will therefore, keep to its superiority of armament and under no circumstances will it allow the lead to be taken from it. If the German soldier even now possesses the best arms in the world, then he will get this year and next year, even better ones.

If, even now, the material side of the struggle is no burden for him, as opposed to the state of affairs in the last war, then in future it will not become worse, but even better. We are under an obligation to harness the whole of the working-power of the nation to this greatest process of armament in world history. The necessary measures will be taken with National Socialist determination and thoroughness. Apart from this, I can give to you Members of Parliament, men of the German Reichstag, the assurance that I am looking to the future absolutely calmly, and with unshakable confidence.

The German Reich and its allies represent militarily, economically and also morally, a power superior to any possible coalition in the world. The German armed forces will always and everywhere intervene when and wherever it is necessary. The German nation will accompany its soldiers on their way with its confidence. It knows that **the war is the consequence of the greed of a few international warmongers, and of the hatred of the Jewish democracies standing behind them.** These criminals have refused every German offer of peace because it was contrary to their capitalist interests. But he who dares to use the word "God" for such devilish activity blasphemes against Providence and, according to our belief, he cannot end except in destruction.

Thus today **we are fighting, not only for our own existence, but also to liberate the world from a conspiracy which, without scruples, put the happiness of nations and people second to the basest egoism.** The National Socialist Movement has once defeated this enemy in a struggle lasting for 15 years within the Reich; the National Socialist State will also be able to defend itself against them externally. The year 1941 shall and will go down in history as the greatest of our resurrection. The German Armed Forces, Army, Navy, and Air Force, will fulfill their highest duty in this sense. Let me at this point express my thanks to the German soldiers who in this campaign again gained superior achievements, my thanks also to the German people in town and country who have created the conditions for these successes by their industry.

Our special thanks to those German *Volksgenossen* who, as victims of this war, have fallen or were wounded, and to those relatives who mourn these victims. If we, with all this in mind, **look up to the Almighty Ruler of fates**, then we have to thank Him especially that He made it possible for us to gain those great successes with so little bloodshed. **We can only ask Him not to forsake our people in the future.** What is

within our power to defend ourselves against our enemies will be done. **In this country a spirit has come to life which the world has hitherto never overcome.**

A pious feeling for community prevails in our nation: a feeling which we have gained in fight after many mistakes. That which makes us feel so proud compared with other nations, no power in the world can wrest away from us. **In the era of the Jewish capitalistic and class mania stands the National Socialist peoples' State like a rock of social justice and clear reason which will not only survive this war, but even the coming millennium.**

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4 May 1941, Adolf Hitler makes a speech in Berlin's Reichstag about the Balkan situation – [Hitler Archive](#)

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